

Hurricane Katrina – A Call for Nurse Volunteers

In the wake of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, the American Red Cross has opened over 200 shelters across the Gulf Coast area that will house about 40,000 people. The Gulf States are in desperate need of nursing volunteers to assist in the relief effort. Contact your local Red Cross Chapter for volunteer information.

Mississippi

The Mississippi Board of Nursing is coordinating efforts to supply nurses to hospitals on the Gulf Coast. Nurses interested in volunteering should email Delia Owens at DOwens@msbn.state.ms.us for further information and instructions. The Mississippi Department of Health is currently undertaking an assessment of hospital needs and will be able to determine where nurses are most urgently needed by the end of the week.

Louisiana

The Louisiana Board of Nursing is located in Metairie, Louisiana, which was directly impacted by the hurricane. Therefore, Board staff is not currently available to answer questions or provide information. However, if you are a nurse interested in providing volunteer services in Louisiana, the following information may be helpful:

Nursing licensure statutes in the state of Louisiana provide licensure exemptions for registered or advanced practice nurses who are currently licensed in another state and (1) who are temporarily caring for a patient in Louisiana but not holding themselves out as nurses licensed to practice in Louisiana or (2) who are employed by an individual, agency, or corporation located in another state and whose employment responsibilities include transporting clients to, from, or throughout Louisiana.

The exemptions are for up to six months and the names and placement of the nurses must be sent to the Louisiana Board of Nursing office. This can be done now through a fax at the following number: (225) 346-1467.

The statutes also provide for licensure exemptions for licensed practical nurses in the case of emergency.

Florida

The Florida Department of Health has established a website to collect information from health care practitioners interested in volunteering to provide disaster relief in the Gulf Coast area. They can register at this website: www.disasterhelp.net/gulfcoast. Volunteer information will be passed on to state and federal coordinators.

The Florida Board of Nursing will also assist nurses who have been displaced to Florida from affected areas in other states by issuing a 90-day temporary license. The nurse should contact the Board at (850) 245-4125 and an expedited application can be faxed or emailed. All nurses working in Florida must possess a valid Florida license or temporary permit.

The Florida Board of Nursing has also instituted the disaster temporary nursing permit process for those facilities affected by the recent hurricanes directly or by facilities receiving patients from affected areas. In addition, the board office will work on an individual basis with staffing agencies that are targeting disaster relief nursing services.